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UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 000962

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP, AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: CAMBODIA: THREE ANTI-DRUG DEPT POLICE GUARDING OUM
CHHAY WHEN HE DIED

¶1. (SBU) On August 21, 2007, OUM Chhay, former advisor to National Assembly President Heng Samrin, died under suspicious circumstances while in the custody of Ministry of Interior (MOI) Cambodian National Police Anti-Drug Department officials. Oum Chhay appeared to have fallen to his death out of a second story window at the Department's Phnom Penh office. The Ministry of Interior maintains the death was a suicide. However, human rights groups claimed foul and suspected that the man was pushed to his death. Oum Chhay was found on his back on the ground beneath the second story window, apparently having fallen directly on the back of his head. Doubters of the suicide story have argued that this position is unlikely for someone who willingly jumped to his death. The low height of the window -- estimated to be about 15 feet off the ground -- also made the suicide claim suspect.

¶2. (SBU) Soon after the death, the MOI established an investigating committee that included the prosecutor of the Phnom Penh Court, police officials, a doctor, and Oum Chhay's wife. The investigating committee determined that the death was suicide. The committee also reported that three police officers were on duty in the room with Oum Chhay when he died, and those three officers were suspended. (Note: We are checking on their current status. End note.) Their names and titles are:

Police Lieutenant Colonel CHEA Leng, Anti-Drug Department
Anti-Counterfeit Investigation Office Chief;

Lieutenant CHAN Phanny, Anti-Drug Department Anti-Counterfeit
Investigation Office Deputy Chief; and,

Lieutenant KHUN Vannak, Anti-Drug Department Anti-Counterfeit
Investigation Office Deputy Chief.

¶3. (U) Sub-units of the Anti-Drug Department are:
Administrative Office, Investigation/Research Office,
Anti-Drug Trafficking Office, Anti-Consumption Office,
Anti-Counterfeit Office, Technical Office, Legal Office,
Intervention Office, and Education Office.

¶4. (SBU) Background on OUM Chhay: OUM Chhay was 51 years old, reportedly an army general, and held the prestigious Cambodian title of "Oknha." He was owner of Chhay Chay Investment Company located in the Poipet Special Economic Zone. OUM Chhay was arrested in connection with a high-profile meth-amphetamine precursor lab bust in Kampong Speu province in August 2007. MOI officials reported OUM Chhay's transportation company had helped to transport chemicals to make amphetamine precursors.
RODLEY